



# Keep the Momentum Going....

...and take it beyond the day! Increasing physical activity among children, teaching safe walking skills, easing traffic and improving the environment around schools can not be achieved in one day. Many communities are using Walk to School Day to kick off long-term programs designed to bring about permanent changes. Here are six great things you can do to make Walk to School have lasting impact in you community:

**Don't let Walk to School end after just one day.**

**Try any of the following to keep kids**

## **Walking to School:**

**Walking Wednesdays** - Designate the first Wednesday of the month, or every Wednesday, as Walk to School Wednesday.

**Class-by-class walking competitions** - Reward the class that has the greatest percentage of students walking to school at least three days a week, and the one that collectively walks the greatest distance. Also reward the classes with the most improved number of participants over the weeks, months, or year.

**Walk at school opportunities** - Not all children live close enough to walk, so provide recess or PE time for walking, so that all classes have an equal chance.

**"Remote" drop off areas** - Designate areas 1/4 to 1/2 mile from school where parents can drop off children and they can safely walk the remaining distance to school. This assures that even children who must be driven to school get to take part in the fun and enjoy the benefits.

**Pedometer-based walking program** - A pedometer is a small, pager-sized step counter worn on the hip; some are available for as little as \$4 a piece in bulk. Get them for kids and see if they can increase their total daily steps because of their walks to and from school.

**Walk somewhere special** - Keep track of your class' or school's total, accumulated walking distance, and walk to a specific destination — say, in Europe, Asia, or South America. Study your target destination and plan a party based on the local culture for when you "arrive."

**Hold Top Ten contests** - Have students list the top ten ways they got parents to walk with them, top ten funny things they saw while walking, top ten reasons to walk, top ten things that must be improved, top ten walking songs or poems. Have monthly contests or votes to pick the best ten school-wide.

- **Mile-walk challenge** - Do the mile walk challenge.

Walk a mile for time at the beginning of the year, then repeat after eight months of walking to (or at) school.

- **Write to walking pen pals** - Go to the [International Walk to School Web site](http://www.internationalwalktoschool.org) and find a nation (with walkers) that's interesting to your students. Contact the country coordinator to link with a participating school for walking pen pals to share ideas and experiences.

## **DESIGNATE SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL**

Some communities outline the best routes for children and adults to walk to school, based on the best facilities, least traffic, and safest street crossings. In some areas this has led to on-going efforts to create better routes-building and repairing of sidewalks and pathways, hiring crossing guards, improving crosswalks. In some states it's even gone further. Originally, legislators in California, and now in other states, have earmarked specific funds for the improvement of walking and cycling routes to schools. So called "Safe Routes" legislation assures that local communities have the money to make improvements once residents and officials realize what's needed. To read more about Safe Routes to School programs around the U.S., check out the following link: National Summary:

<http://www.transact.org/report.asp?id=49>

## **LAUNCH A WALKING SCHOOL BUS**

In some areas the facilities are in place, but parents don't feel safe letting their children-especially young ones-walk alone. For many of these schools, Walking School Buses are the answer. These are groups of children who walk designated routes to school under adult supervision, picking up kids along the way just like a bus. For some neighborhoods it's a casual group walk, while others set up a formal plan with adults scheduled to walk on certain days and pulling a wagon for book bags. Launch a bus that's right for your community. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has published a comprehensive, step-by-step guide to launching a walking school bus in your community. For a complete list of links associated with walking school buses, visit <http://www.walkingschoolbus.org>.

### **PROMOTE HEALTH MESSAGES:**

There are plenty of great reasons to walk to school-less traffic, safer streets, cleaner air-but one of the best is that children and parents will be healthier. With obesity rates skyrocketing and only one-quarter of Americans able to get the Surgeon General's recommended daily dose of physical activity (just 30 minutes;), it's an ideal time to encourage people to walk to school for their own health and well-being. The following is a list of web sites that may be useful in this endeavor:

- Give kids access to physical activity information that's actually relevant and presented for them. Go to the CDC's site, <http://www.bam.gov>.
- For data on physical activity and chronic disease rates nationally and in your state, go to: <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/dnpa/stats.htm>.
- For a listing of programs to promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles, <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physicalactivity.htm>.
- For summaries of recent research on promoting physical activity in communities: <http://prevention.sph.sc.edu>.
- For a comprehensive listing of links and organizations related to physical activity, nutrition, and health, go to the CDC's resource list at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/dnpalink.htm#Resources>.

### **Distribute Walkability Checklists to All Participants**

The Walkability Checklist can help you and other Walk to School Day participants evaluate just how walkable your community is. Taken with you on a walk through your neighborhood, the Checklist allows you to easily record problems and offers both immediate and long-term solutions. The walkability checklist can be assessed at <http://www.walktoschool-usa.org/pdf/walkingchecklist.pdf>

### **Fix the Problems...**

You can't fix everything at once. But you can start. Create a prioritized list. A first step might be to list the problems that have come up most in the walkability checklists and discuss which seem to be the most important. Rank them first according to which would positively affect the most kids if you were able to fix them. Then rank them according to which appear to be the easiest to fix. Those that score highly on both lists are candidates for your community to take action on right away.

- This is where your community partnerships come in to play...encourage them to support changes and make sure these community leaders understand the positive impact these changes will provide the community so that they become priority issues.
- You may not be a traffic engineer, but you can think about logical solutions to your problems. To describe problems you've found (say, an intersection that's too hard for children to cross) and to learn of possible solutions, refer to <http://www.walkinginfo.org/de/tools.cfm?codename=1a>